THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) to (f) According to information made available by the State Government of Orissa, two steel plants are proposed to be set up at Gopalpur, Orissa by M/s. Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd. (TISCO) and M/s. Larsen & Toubro Ltd., respectively. Both the steel plants are proposed in the private sector and their expected installed capacities would be 2.5 million tpa and 2.6 million tpa respectively, in the first phase. Pre-project activities comprising inter-alia land acquisition, preparation of detailed cost estimates etc. are in progress. The likely dates of commissioning, as intimated by the companies, of the two steel plants mentioned above are March, 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Mochi Caste

5484. DR. VALLABH BHAI KATHERIA : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Mochi has been included in the Scheduled Caste category by the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government intend to exclude the said caste from Scheduled Caste List; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) and (b) 'Mochi' or 'Muchi' are specified as Scheduled Castes in relation to the States/UTs of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, West Bengal, Delhi and Mizoram.

(c) and (d) Representations/recommendations have been received, inter-alia, for deletion of 'Muchi' from the list of Scheduled Castes of Arunachal Pradesh and for reimposing area restrictions on the specification of 'Mochi' as a Scheduled Caste within the State of Gujarat. These are under the consideration of the Government.

Gaggal Airport

5485. SHRI SAT MAHAJAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Gaggal (Kangra) Airport in Himachal Pradesh has been closed for air operations;

(b) if so, the details alongwith reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Indian and foreign tourists visiting HP are facing a lot of difficulties due to the closure of this air service; and

(d) if so, the time by which the airport is likely to be made fully operational ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Gaggal airport is operational.

National Mineral Development Corporation

5486. SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the National Mineral Development Corporation had taken up the task for exploration of Magnasite in Panthal area of Udhampur district in Jammu and Kashmir during 1987;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the amount spent on the said project;

(d) whether the work on the said project has been stopped;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the Corporation intends to resume the work;

(g) if so, the time by which it is likely to be taken up; and

(h) the profit/loss of the project, till date ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The exploration work was initially carried out by State Geology Department. Later, NMDC continued with exploration work. The exploration established a reserve of 2.5 million tonnes of Low Silica High Quality Magnesite.

(c) The total expenditure incurred on the Panthal Magnesite Project upto 31.3.1996 is Rs. 502 lakhs.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The Panthal Magnesite Project was proposed to be taken up by the J&K Mineral Development Corporation Limited (J&KMDC), in which NMDC holds 74% of equity, the remaining 26% held by J&K Minerals Ltd., a State Government Undertaking. The viability of the Project was adversely affected due to fall in international price of DBM of similar quality due to reduction in import duty. Further, financial institutions were not willing to support the project by way of grant of long term loan capital. The Board of Directors of J&KMDC, after getting the consent of J&K Government, have recommended the closure of the project and winding up of the Joint Venture Company in view of

the adverse viability of the project. Government of India has been approached for permission for closure.

(f) NMDC, as the lessee, is examining the possibility of reviving the project in association with any private sector partner who may be prepared to bring adequate capital.

(g) The resumption of work will depend upon the viability of the project.

(h) No profit/loss account has been prepared by J&K MDC as the Company's commercial operations have not yet commenced.

[Translation]

Outstanding Amount of Telephone Bills Against Ministers/M.Ps.

5487. SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Cabinet Ministers/ex-Ministers and M.P./ex-M.Ps. against whom payment of telephone bills is outstanding;

(b) the amount of telephone bills outstanding against each of them, separately; and

(c) the details of the action taken by the Government for the recovery of the amount ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) Official telephones of Ministers are in the names of concerned Ministries and a separate list is not maintained. Information regarding the number of MPs/Ex. MPs against whom payment of telephone bills is outstanding has been called for and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) The recovery of outstanding dues is being pursued with concerned MPs/Ex-MPs. Outstanding dues against Ministries/Departments are being pursued with concerned Ministries/Departments.

[English]

Mining Lease in Assam

5488. DR. PRABIN CHANDRA SARMA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to lease out 5 hectare of reserved forest land in Chandardinga hills in the district of Dhubri, Assam to M/s. Rock Product Traders Company;

(b) if so, the terms and conditions therefor;

(c) whether the Technology Mission, Assam pleaded to scrap the mining lease agreement; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and reaction of the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b) As per information furnished by the State Govt. of Assam, 5.0 hectares of reserved forest land in Chandardinga hills has been granted for rock quarry in favour of M/s. Rock Product Traders Company in the district of Dhubri subject to the following terms and conditions :

(i) Compensatory afforestation is to be raised over equivalent non-forest land which will be notified as protected forest land as per advice of Ministry of Environment and Forest;

(ii) Mining Lease has been granted initially for a period of five years in accordance with Assam Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 1994;

(iii) The mining lease is renewable for one or two periods each not exceeding the period specified in the original lease;

(iv) The lessee shall pay to the State Government royalty @ Rs. 70/- per cubic metre of rock removed by him from the leased area; and

(v) The lessee shall have to acquire prior permission of the Divisional Forest Officer to remove/fall forest produce, if any, occurring in the area in the course of mining operation. The lessee shall pay royalty/compensation at reasonable rate fixed by the Forest Department.

(c) and (d) Though the Appropriate Technology Mission, Assam considered that it would cause serious environmental degradation, the Government of Assam is of the view that there is no forest at all in the applied for area and that the area is rock, barren and there is absence of Flora and Fauna. The State Govt. feels that mining in a small area of 5 hectares will neither cause environmental degradation nor any change of flow of the river or flood in the area.

Vocational Training Centres for Women

5489. SHRI SIBU SOREN : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Women Vocational Training Centres established and run by the Union Government in Jharkhand Region;

(b) whether there is any proposal to establish more Vocational Training Centres in that region;

(c) steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to establish new Women's Vocational Centres in Jharkhand region; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?